



Connecticut Association for the  
Education of Young Children

## Testimony of Karen Rainville on SB 111

### AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

Good afternoon Members of the Appropriations committee and thank you for this opportunity to testify on SB 111. My name is Karen Rainville and I live in Meriden, CT. I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children. On behalf of our nearly 1100 early childhood education and care professionals across the state that make up our membership, we would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify today as we support SB 111.

It is critical to have an immediate investment in childcare. The industry is on the verge of collapse with programs and classrooms closed all over the state because programs cannot hire qualified staff. Families are on wait lists and children are missing out on early childhood experiences that set the foundation for school success.

I would like to point out a few things that will be critical to understand as this bill moves forward.

- Just increasing the reimbursement rate to state funded centers is not enough and will not prevent a collapse of childcare. There are roughly 3600 licensed childcare facilities in CT. 80% of those programs do not receive state funding and would see no change if additional funding went only to increasing the School Readiness rates. Those programs would still be on the verge of closure.
- CT needs an ongoing wage supplement to ensure early childhood teachers earn wages comparable to public school staff. The Office of Early Childhood has laid out a draft compensation schedule and I urge you to review it.
- There is no room to raise tuition for parents to cover the true cost of quality childcare- parents can't afford early care and education now.
- If you do nothing to fix childcare- childcare small business will close, families will be out of work and most importantly, children will miss out on quality early learning experiences that prepare them for school



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success. All things that would translate to a significant financial burden for our state

I'd like to end my testimony with a story-my family's story. My niece and her husband have 4 children. Both she and her husband have good jobs; She as a board-certified psych nurse and her husband as an engineer. When they were both fresh out of school and starting their careers, they were able to enroll their 3 older children in subsidized childcare. All 3 are currently thriving in Meriden schools both socially and academically.

Recently, they had to withdraw their youngest child from his high-quality early childhood program. They no longer qualified for subsidized care and despite having successful careers, as a family of 6 they couldn't afford the \$18,000/year childcare expense on top of a mortgage and student loans. My niece left her nursing job at Yale, ironically where she provided mental health care to children, and took a 3<sup>rd</sup> shift nursing job while her husband works days. Their youngest child is now missing out on his early learning experiences.

Despite having to change their entire family dynamic, they consider themselves fortunate that her career gave them an option-even though it was one they hated to do.

How many families are experiencing the same struggles without the same option? How many parents are forced to leave their jobs in that same situation?

The time for change is now. We need a significant investment of \$700 million dollars towards an early childhood system. CTAEYC stands ready to support your work and welcomes the opportunity to speak with you further about the complex nature of CT's childcare system.